



INTERNAL DISCIPLE UNITY—WHERE NEXT?

The second consultation on internal unity at Wichita, another in Michigan, and informal conversations among ministers in Indianapolis may mark a turning point in this painful estrangement amongst us. Which turn we take depends on some *a priori* matters of method and presupposition—easy to describe, most difficult to apply. Reports of the consultations are to be available and need no elaboration here. A word concerning next stages may be in order.

Brief and jammed as its agenda was, Wichita established that we (with very few exceptions) have no quarrel as to whether there should be structures of cooperation. We are all driven inevitably to create some such structures. Nor have we a quarrel as to whether such structures are defined for us in precise detail in the Scriptures. The real question has to do with the source and nature of authority, and beyond that of our understanding of the nature of God's self-revelation and of man's reception of that revelation, rather than with the consequent substance and instruments of proclamation of that revelation. And when we move to that depth—whether under captions of "Theology of Missions," or "Biblical Theology," or something else, there is as much disagreement among "cooperatives" or among "independents" as there is between "cooperatives" and "independents." This is all to the good, and we need to move to that depth in the next phase of consultations.

It can be done not only at another "Wichita," but in many other places, if we have learned the lessons of Wichita. These five requisites seem apparent:

1. **In intent**—obedience to one Lord. This means no preconceived ideas as to where we will come out; rather, an atmosphere of worship and Divine concern for the world. Nothing else need be begun until we have some

sense of being brought together in confession, thanksgiving and openness to Him. It also means that both "cooperative" and "independent" may well anticipate the necessity of considerable if not drastic transformations.

2. **In encounter**—forthrightness, integrity and charity. What cannot be spoken in this context must be left unspoken, and return again to the atmosphere of worship. Each further consultation should begin with the establishment of some such "ground rules."
3. **In subject matter**—depth levels where our misunderstandings both root and meet in sharpest contradiction. Topics such as "presuppositions and methodology of theology," "authority in scripture, traditions, Tradition," "mission as sent or persuading," "revelation and Christ"—these should thoroughly scramble our present unexamined alignments and push to new depths of sharing and perhaps new leading.
4. **In schedule**—time to pursue and examine expected and unexpected issues as they arise. This may mean a ten-day conference, with some carefully prepared papers, but much flexibility, and resource materials and persons at hand.
5. **In participants**—a working group. This means careful selection for competence, limited in number to working size: 50 maximum? perhaps less.

Then, when and if a consultation throws up findings, these will need careful reflection, debate and response in the larger Brotherhood context so that the dialogue eventually engages us not only with one another, but in dealing with diverse "revelations," will engage us as a whole in dialogue with the Lord of every person and party. This is the most significant potential in our human estrangement.

(Robert Tobias)

USA DEVELOPMENTS in FAITH and ORDER

The National Council's Advisory Committee on Faith and Order, at its second meeting last month, initiated several facets of a program first called for at the Oberlin Faith and Order Conference, 1957.

A *National Study Commission* on the ecclesiological significance of councils of churches will begin its work this autumn. Its first task will be to analyze the phenomenon of councils of churches in North America, reasons for their creation, their self-understanding, the churches' understanding of them, and the meaning of this phenomenon for the brokenness and the wholeness of the church. Theologians, historians, denominational and council executives will be included in the Commission. Its work is likely to continue over several years.

A second study area, *faith, order and organization*, will be considered by several regional groups, and eventually

by some larger commission. This study picks up the concern of the Oberlin Conference for consideration of fundamental bases and shape of the Church's oneness. Here, American churches may make a significant contribution to world levels of Faith and Order discussion, where, having achieved a remarkable degree of cooperative unity, the question is now raised as to whether and how the churches may press on to ultimate questions concerning the shape and structure of one church. The study will need clearly to bring into focus the best insights of Biblical, historical and theological scholarship. In this connection the Advisory Committee has also informed the World Council's Faith and Order Department that it would welcome (on a world basis) an expanded program which would (a) provide encounter between church executives at Faith and Order dimensions, and (b) provide for the continuing

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PROGRESS REPORT ON DISCIPLE STUDY COMMISSIONS

Intensive ecumenical study is presently being carried on by three specialized study commissions of the Disciples. These commissions involve key leaders in their respective areas and their work promises to be quite significant to the life and work of the Disciples. Following is a brief progress report on the work of each of these groups:

Commission on Biblical Theology

Prof. William L. Reed, Chairman

Under the sponsorship of the Council on Christian Unity this Commission has held four meetings during the past year and a half. So far the Commission has done work in three major areas: (1) the general context in which the renewed interest in Biblical theology has taken place and the historic background of the present interest; (2) comparative study of contemporary viewpoints on Biblical theology; and (3) early Disciple thought on this subject.

The main purpose of this Commission is two-fold: (1) to involve Disciples more deeply in the contemporary renaissance of Biblical theology, and (2) to study the meaning and development of Biblical theology and its import and implications for the contemporary life and work of Disciple churches and agencies.

The scope of the group's work can be seen in a list of the papers which they have already produced and discussed:

- "Some Ultimate Questions in Biblical Theology"
- "General Background of Biblical Theology in the Historical Context"
- "Three Views of Biblical Theology: Burrows, Bultmann, Grant"
- "The Authority of the Bible in the Thought of Early Disciples"
- "A Discussion of the Problem of Entmythologisierung Between Professors Rudolf Bultmann, Gunther Bornham and Karl Schumann"
- "Analysis of Guiding Principles in Biblical Interpretation"
- "What Does It Mean to Preach from the Bible?"
- "The Person of Christ in the Kerygma"
- "The Place of the Bible in the Present Life and Thought of the Disciples of Christ"
- "Biblical Theology and a Scientific World View"
- "The Victory of Faith (A Sermon)"
- "The Decade of Decision: A Dialogue in Critical Examination of Disciple Planning and Publication from the Viewpoint of Biblical Theology"

Most of these papers will soon be available in an issue of the *Ecumenical Studies Series*. This will allow others to participate in this on-going study process.

The next meeting of this Commission will be in April, 1961. The tentative program includes presentation and discussion of the following papers:

- "What Is Biblical Theology?"
- "Biblical Theology and the Science of Language: A Symposium"
- "Language of Art, Science and Theology"

"Biblical Theology and Linguistic Analysis"

"What Is God's Purpose?"

"The End and the Ends"

"Alexander Campbell's Principles of Biblical Interpretation"

"Some Reflections on Biblical Theology and College Teaching"

"Biblical Theology and Group Decision"

Commission on Theology of Mission

Prof. Joseph M. Smith, Chairman

This Commission, sponsored jointly by the Council on Christian Unity and the Division of World Mission of the UCMS, is engaged in a critical re-study of the theology of mission in light of recent theological thought and ecumenical developments. Its task is basically three-fold:

1. to explore theological roots underlying critical issues presently facing the Division of World Mission and to suggest foundations requisite for a theologically sound mission program;
2. to participate on behalf of the Brotherhood in the present ecumenical study in this field sponsored by the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches;
3. to help stimulate the Brotherhood to deeper levels of theological understanding of our knowledge of God and our urgent privilege to proclaim His love to the whole world.

In carrying out these purposes the Commission has already done the following:

1. An examination of the Disciples heritage in the theory and practice of mission.
2. A theological critique of "Strategy of World Mission: Basic Policy of the Division of World Mission of the United Christian Missionary Society."
3. A Disciple reaction to the WCC's study document on "Theology of Evangelism"
4. A Disciple response to the WCC's report on "Christian Witness, Proselytism and Religious Liberty in the Setting of the World Council of Churches"
5. A Disciple response to the WCC's document on "A Theological Reflection on the Work of Evangelism"

With this beginning the Commission is now moving forward with a more systematic and detailed study of the various issues and questions involved in the theology of mission with the hope of producing a useful document as well as involving Disciple leaders in the on-going study process. This phase of the group's work has been structured under the following main divisions:

Introduction: The Role of Theology in the Life and Mission of the Church

- I. The source of the mission
- II. The object of the mission
- III. The agent and authority of the mission
- IV. The practice of the mission
- V. The end and goal of the mission

STUDY COMMISSIONS—(Continued)

VI. The Disciples of Christ and the Christian world mission

Involved in the work of this group are theological professors, New Testament scholars, missionaries, mission administrators, pastors, laymen and students. At work since the Fall of 1958, the group will continue its work for at least several more years. In line with the nature of all the Disciple ecumenical study commissions, the Commission on Theology of Missions is not merely involved in a highly theoretical and academic discussion but rather in seeking to deal creatively and constructively with the real and practical problems which face the Brotherhood in the fulfillment of its missionary task. The work of these groups show theology at work—practical theology at its best.

Anyone interested in sampling the kind of work being done by this Commission and participating in the on-going study process may secure the first set of papers which were produced, read and discussed by the group. They are available in the January, 1960 issue of the *Ecumenical Studies Series* (Vol. IV, No. 4) published by the Council on Christian Unity (\$1.00 single copy).

Commission on Rapid Social Change

Prof. Walter W. Sikes, Director

This Commission, sponsored jointly by the Council on Christian Unity and the Department of Social Welfare of the United Society, is involved in a program of study on "The Common Christian Responsibility Toward Areas of Rapid Social Change." Through the work of this commission Disciples participate with other denominations and council of churches in a world-wide study project sponsored by the Department of Church and Society of the World Council of Churches and focused on the present rapid social changes going on in the so-called "under-developed countries"—Asia, Africa, Latin America.

The world-wide project is intended to discuss, define and articulate "our common Christian responsibility" to these areas, and by all necessary means to criticize and amend policy, strategy, and program of churches, church agencies, peoples, institutions and procedure—economic,

political and cultural. The purpose of the Disciples' Commission is to provide a means whereby (1) findings and implications of the project may be made available to Disciple members, congregations, and agencies, and (2) contributions of Disciples may be made available to the appropriate groups of the WCC, NCC, et al. It is anticipated that at some future time analogous studies may be focused upon other areas (e.g., rapid social change in the West) and more specific aspects of social change (e.g., the problems of race and color).

The Commission is doing its work in three stages:

Stage I involves discussing, isolating, describing and analyzing the dominant aspects of rapid social change in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Stage II involves laying the groundwork for effectual communication with the churches through publications, study conferences and other procedures. Stage III involves the actual publication of whatever materials are judged appropriate and the initiation and carrying forward of other ways and means for making the findings of this project useful and available.

The first stage of this work was completed in December, 1959. It was done primarily through a study of the materials which came out of individual and group studies of the WCC project and the various NCC and Disciple statements which relate to rapid social change.

Now in its second stage of work, the Commission is simultaneously carrying out two processes:

1. Exploration and description of the "Disciple mind" as to the understanding, the attitudes, and the practices of the average churchman with respect to the revolutionary events of our day—economic, political, social, religious. This research is being done by a process of random sampling of typical churches and communities.
2. Drafting of interpretative documents on the situations of rapid social change and their implications for Christian action. This will include popular interpretations for publication in journals and for use of those who produce study materials for churches. It will also include interpretations for use by those who are in positions which carry responsibility for decisions and action in making and administering policy in church and society—in business, industry, government, education, missionary enterprises, etc.

The Commission is also doing further depth study in such areas as: (1) rapid social change as seen in the perspective of long-range history and the providence of God; (2) principles of economics (capitalism, etc.) as related to Christian theology; (3) political issues: nationalism, regionalism, continentalism, "worldism"; and, (4) Christian responsibility in social change.

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imaginative effort of theologians and ecclesiologists specializing in this area.

Several other topics of urgent concern are under consideration by the Advisory Committee for best methods of implementation.

A Faith and Order Studies Bulletin has been authorized for publication beginning this autumn. It will carry information about study issues and projects, study materials available, bibliography and suggestions for concern and action.

The secretary in New York, the Rev. William Norgren, has now assembled a library of Faith and Order documents, and will provide such services as time permits to groups engaging in this area of concern. This office will also carry responsibility for dissemination in North America of materials for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Christian Unity Newsletter: Issued quarterly to members and friends of the Council by the Council on Christian Unity (an association of Disciples of Christ for the promotion of Christian unity, for ecumenical fellowship and service), 222 So. Downey Ave., Indianapolis 7, Indiana, U.S.A. Robert Tobias and Robert Heckard, editors.

ECUMENICAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED TO W. R. VIVRETT

Dr. William R. Vivrett, pastor of the East End Christian Church in Pittsburgh, has been awarded a scholarship to attend the 1960-61 session of the World Council of Churches' Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies at Bossey, Switzerland.



Dr. Vivrett

The grant made to Dr. Vivrett is part of the Council on Christian Unity's ecumenical scholarship program which is designed to develop ecumenical leadership among Disciples. Funds for this fourth annual scholarship to a Disciple minister or layman are provided by the Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Foundation of Columbus, Indiana. Last year's recipient was Dr. J. Daniel Joyce, Professor of

New Testament at Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Dr. Vivrett has served the East End Christian Church since 1947. He has also been a lecturer in philosophy and ethics in the College of the University of Pittsburgh and a lecturer in the Graduate School of Social Work. Previously he held pastorates in Denton, Texas; Lubbock, Texas; Danburg, Connecticut; and New Orleans, Louisiana. He has held several responsible positions of leadership within the Brotherhood and has given leadership to interdenominational and community organizations wherever he has been. Dr. Vivrett is presently serving on the Disciples Commission on Rapid Social Change.

Accompanied by his wife, Dr. Vivrett will leave in July for a travel-study trip to various places in Europe prior to his study at Bossey, and during the Christ-

mas recess to the Middle East. Dr. Vivrett is particularly interested in learning about the influence of the Church on social welfare legislation and the condition of social change in these parts of the world.

His agenda will include conferences with government and church officials in Oslo, Stockholm, Helsinki, and Copenhagen. The Vivretts will return to the U.S. in February, 1961, following the term of study at the Ecumenical Institute.

The general theme for this ninth session of the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies will be "The Witness of the Church in a non-Christian and post-Christian World." In addition there will be some study of various types of united churches and lecturers on the history of the ecumenical movement and the present work of the World Council of Churches.

Application for Membership
COUNCIL ON CHRISTIAN UNITY

An association of Disciples of Christ for the promotion of Christian unity, for ecumenical study and service

222 SOUTH DOWNEY AVENUE

INDIANAPOLIS 7, INDIANA

Being in sympathy with the purposes of the Council on Christian Unity as set forth in its charter (see below) and desiring to further its work by active participation in its program and witness, I hereby apply for membership in the Council and enclose \$_____ for _____ year(s) membership.

- ☐ Annual Member\$ 3.00
- ☐ Annual Contributing Member 10.00
- ☐ Annual Cooperating Member 25.00
- ☐ Annual Participating Member 50.00
- ☐ Annual Supporting Member 100.00
- ☐ Annual Sustaining Member 250.00
- ☐ Annual Patron Member 500.00

Name _____

Address _____

Church _____

Minister (local church) ☐

Minister (general work) ☐

Student..... ☐ Layman..... ☐

Purpose of the Council

The purpose of the Council is "to watch for every indication of Christian unity, to initiate steps for Christian union, and to hasten the time of its fulfilment through intercessory prayer, friendly conferences, study of pertinent issues, publication and distribution of literature, prophetic witness to the will of Christ for His Church and the practice of love, fellowship and mutual service among Christians. The Council shall give particular attention to the development and nurture of an ecumenical spirit among Disciples of Christ."

Membership Responsibilities and Privileges

- 1) Participation in policies and decisions through the Annual Meeting.
- 2) Promotion of Christian unity locally.
- 3) Participation in the on-going study program of the Council.
- 4) Subscription to: *Christian Unity Newsletter* (quarterly)
Ecumenical Studies Series (quarterly).
- 5) Receive other materials published or distributed by the Council, such as: "Together," Ecumenical Book Shelf, Pentecost materials, Leaflet for "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity."